IMAGINE LEXINGTON
ANNUAL
REPORT 2020-2021

imagine
LEXINGTON

LEXINGTON
Planning

Provided for:

Lexington-Fayette Urban County Planning Commission

Planning Commission Work Session
Thursday, March 18, 2021

Provided by:

Lexington-Fayette Urban County Division of Planning - Long-Range Planning

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What's inside...

The 2018 Comprehensive Plan, *Imagine Lexington*, seeks to provide

flexible yet focused

planning guidance to ensure equitable development of our community's resources and infrastructure that enhances our quality of life, and fosters regional planning and economic development. This will be accomplished while protecting the environment, promoting successful, accessible neighborhoods, and preserving the unique Bluegrass landscape that has made Lexington-Fayette County the Horse Capital of the World.

Looking Through & Beyond the Pandemic

How does Lexington's vision, set prior to the current COVID-19 pandemic, respond to the unanticipated challenges we currently face. Luckily the foresight of the over 10,000 people who participated in the creation of the plan, the Planning Commission, and the Urban County Council, put forward a resilient plan that is highly adaptable and situationally flexible to meet the needs of an ever-changing community. In fact, many of the trends and needs already identified within *Imagine Lexington* have been magnified by the current pandemic situation, making the implementation items called for in the plan increasingly important and timely.

In addition to responding to a global health crisis, the United States, Kentucky, and Lexington are currently tackling a topic of equal importance by addressing systemic racism with long overdue social justice reform. The Mayor's Commission on Racial Justice and Equality has recently published a report with cross-cutting recommendations for issues from law enforcement to housing and gentrification. Many of these specifically further the goals, objectives, and policies of the Comprehensive Plan, and these recommendations will continue to be relied upon as regulation changes are pursued. Equity, identified as one of the central pillars of successful neighborhoods and a consistent element throughout *Imagine Lexington*, has been and will remain at the forefront of all decision-making.

In light of the preceding, the following will review a number of topics that have seen some changes over the past two years since *Imagine Lexington's* adoption:

Retail Trends

Since the beginning of the century, the United States has seen significant growth in annual e-commerce sales. Shifts in consumer behavior, particularly among millennials, have contributed to a near 15% increase in online sales revenue every year since 2010. While e-commerce only makes up about 10% of the U.S.'s total retail annual revenue (with the remaining 90% coming from traditional brick and mortar stores), its unprecedented growth and accessibility has some forecasting e-commerce's eventual reign over the retail sector. Such a changeover will likely cause traditional brick and mortar businesses, such as strip malls and big box stores, to become a less prominent component of the landscape.

Excerpt from Theme E, Growth Policy 10

Imagine Lexington identified a trend of brick and mortar stores increasingly moving toward an e-commerce model, and specifically noted that Lexington is even further at risk with a much higher rate of retail square footage per capita than international, national, and regional averages. Since that time, this shift has been further amplified by the general public's increased safety concerns with in-person shopping for consumer goods including clothing and even groceries, or dining at restaurants. Businesses large and small are turning to shipping and delivery as their primary method for providing goods to their customers. In addition to the average consumer's comfort level, government mandated COVID-19 related restrictions have also temporarily affected building capacities and procedures for in-person service to help mitigate the spread of the disease.

These factors combined have changed consumer behavior, and it remains to be seen how it will impact future consumer preferences overall. Given the previously identified retail trends though, it is reasonable to assume that these shifts will further speed up the process that was already underway from brick and mortar to e-commerce for everyday consumer items. *Imagine Lexington* anticipated this shift, and we are actively implementing policies to provide the flexibility and options necessary to facilitate the evolution of this industry. The B-6P Commercial Center Zone was revised during the comprehensive planning process to allow for residential components into our regional shopping centers, and plans and studies like *Imagine Nicholasville Road* continue to emphasize the revitalization of our big box stores as they phase out and look for new life. The redevelopment of our underutilized retail property is a key component of *Imagine Lexington's* growth strategy.

Professional Office Shift

According to several industry professionals in Lexington, there is a surplus of vacant professional office space. Reviewing NAI Isaac's 2017 Market Report, the vacancy rate for office space is around 12%, with over a million square feet of available space throughout the urban service area. This is a significantly higher vacant rate than either industrial or retail.

Excerpt from Theme E, Growth Policy 10

Similar to the evolution of retail operations, *Imagine Lexington* also identified professional office space as another potential opportunity for repurposing and redevelopment. With changes over time in how employees interact with open-concept floor plans and fewer isolated offices, less space and infrastructure required for technology devices, and an increase in employees working from home, employers no longer need the amount of space they once did. The Comprehensive Plan put forward an action item to "Study the efficacy of the professional office zone, looking for ordinance revisions aimed at reducing vacancy rate" (Theme C, Prosperity Policy #9). The idea here is to find new complementary uses that can utilize professionally zoned space to allow those buildings to fulfill their full potential.

This trend is another that has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with a large percentage of the population now working from home to avoid the risk of virus transmission. People are now more comfortable than ever with video teleconferencing. In fact, BusinessofApps noted that the popular platform, ZOOM, had gone

from 10 million daily meeting participants in December 2019 to around 300 million just four months later. Additionally, Gallup is reporting that as of October 2020, 33% of U.S workers are always working remote and that 25% are sometimes working off-site. Those numbers are down from April 2020, but the same poll shows that nearly two-thirds of all U.S. workers who have been working remotely during the pandemic would like to continue to do so. Furthermore, per Flexjobs, a Gartner survey of company leaders indicated that 80% of them plan to continue to allow remote work at least part-time post-pandemic.

Given that a large percentage of the U.S. workforce has been working from home for nearly a year, an arrangement that corporate leaders are coming to embrace, it is safe to assume that the professional office vacancies that were identified during the *Imagine Lexington* process will continue to grow. The Comprehensive Plan puts forth a strategy to tackle this issue, and staff has already begun to explore regulatory changes to put it into practice.

Open Space

Incorporate adequate greenspace and open space into all development projects, which serve the needs of the intended user.

Theme A, Goal 2, Objective C

Theme A, Goal 2 calls for the Comprehensive Plan to, "Support infill & redevelopment throughout the Urban Service Area as a strategic component of growth," but Objective C stated above has nothing to do with the built environment, but rather with greenspace and open space that supports the development. This was intentional, and a key reason why this topic is covered so thoroughly within the Design pillar of the Neighborhoods chapter of *Imagine Lexington*. Infill and redevelopment are crucial to Lexington's sustainable growth, but making sure we have adequate access to recreation and nature as we continue to densify is equally as important to ensure increased quality of life.

Theme A, Design Policy #9 states that we should, "Provide adequate greenspace for all neighborhoods within walking distance,"

something that not only follows urban planning best practice, but was also a consistent theme of discussion throughout the public input process for *Imagine Lexington*. This is another topic that the current pandemic has once again shone a light on. With the high percentage of people working from home and the current inability to gather inside in large groups for social events, many have returned to their neighborhood parks and trails for recreation and gathering. Additionally, many local gyms have been closed or have reduced capacity resulting in these open spaces, trails, and sidewalks to be increasingly used for exercise as well. As people strive to remain active and connected in a difficult time, these community-focused amenities become increasingly important and frequented.

The Comprehensive Plan has anticipated the need for increased common open/greenspace and has provided an implementation strategy to address this need. Planning staff has begun drafting regulations to help ensure our open spaces are appropriately provided and are meeting the needs of the intended users.

Equity

> *As the demand for housing in traditionally minority and disadvantaged communities becomes stronger and more desirable, there will be serious issues caused by the gentrification of those neighborhoods for the existing residents. An equitable housing policy is suggested to mitigate the effects and ensure there are places for existing residents to live within the community they know so well. Lexington's housing policies can and should address the displacement caused by the market forces of gentrification.*

Excerpt from Theme A, Equity Pillar

Equity is a pillar of *Imagine Lexington's* Theme A, Building Successful Neighborhoods, as it is a structural part of doing just that. In order for us to truly be a successful community, we must be able to ensure we are providing access to opportunity for everyone, and as the Mayor's Commission for Racial Justice & Equality pointed out, we have a long way to go to get there. *Imagine Lexington* has explicitly called out equity specifically for the first time in our Comprehensive Plan, which is a major step, but we must continue to move forward to implement the concept with added urgency. The plan calls for increased housing options and a regulatory framework that allows these increased options throughout Lexington to help alleviate the effects of market-driven gentrification. By providing more opportunities for development everywhere in the city, the development pressures will be more equitably distributed throughout the Urban Service Area. The topics of gentrification and displacement have rightfully gained increased traction over the past year due to current events highlighting much needed social justice reform.

Imagine Lexington's Equity policies not only address housing, but also access to transit and needed services, as well as identifying potential code enforcement policies. The theme of equity can be found throughout the Comprehensive Plan often through the lens of access.

The Mayor's Commission identified several key recommendations on housing and gentrification and several are aimed squarely at Planning. Specifically, Recommendation #3 reads, "The city must put in place mechanisms to keep housing affordable. It is possible to stem the tide of gentrification, while creating more housing opportunity for all Lexingtonians." It goes on to say, "Lexington must take an actively anti-racist approach to its land use policy, with a goal of integrated, walkable, transit-accessible neighborhoods for all residents. Zoning policies must be re-written to allow for greater density, supply, and affordability. Supporting housing-related policies and budgets must be reallocated to protect existing affordability and expand low- and middle-income housing across the city to prevent further isolation and segregation of our less affluent neighbors."
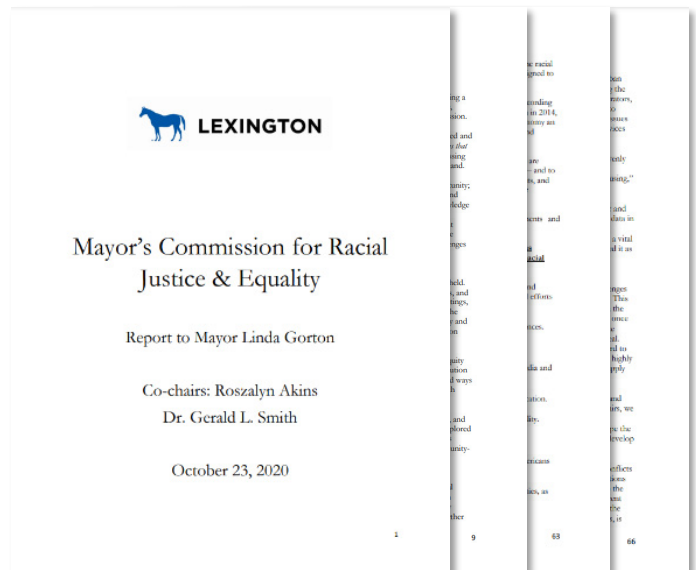
These recommendations from the Commission are in lock-step with the recommended policies in *Imagine Lexington* and will be used as further justification for zoning ordinance recommendations. In addition to increasing housing supply, the Comprehensive Plan also calls for ways to reinforce base-level living standards through additional action items like creating a rental registration program. Planning would not necessarily be the lead agency in pursuing this action item, but has provided the basis for it to move forward. This program would help to maintain living standards and provide additional protections that would prevent properties from continuing to devalue until redevelopment is the only option. It is important to tackle the housing and gentrification problem through both the supply side and by also supporting the floor, and the Comprehensive Plan provides strategies for both.

Density

> Accommodate the demand for housing in Lexington responsibly, prioritizing higher-density and mixture of housing types.
>
> *Theme A, Goal 1, Objective B*

Imagine Lexington undoubtedly calls for increased density overall as Lexington continues to grow and develop. Maintaining a compact urban form is critical to ensure we do not sprawl and outstrip our ability to pay for the infrastructure required to serve new development. The Urban Service Boundary was established on this concept in 1958, and the same principles apply today. However, the Comprehensive Plan is also very explicit on the need for livable density, not strictly density for density's sake. This is achieved through increased connectivity, open space, amenities, placemaking, and a mix of uses.

There has been some speculation that there is a direct correlation between urban density and the impact of COVID-19, and therefore we must abandon our emphasis on increased density. The insinuation is that we should move back toward a model of sprawling residential development, spreading out and reducing the potential for contact between one another. However; a recent study has indicated that density is not the primary contributor to the spread of the disease. In fact the study found that counties with higher densities actually have lower mortality rates possibly due to access to better healthcare, overall better baseline health, and "greater implementation of social distancing policies and practices" (Hamidi, et al., 2020).

Additionally, headlines have recently described some residents abandoning large metropolitan cities like New York City, San Francisco, and Boston due to concerns with COVID-19 and overcrowding, but mid-size cities like Lexington are poised to be receivers of these residents, specifically with our Comprehensive Plan's vision for livable density. Continuing to focus on those quality of life issues through recent and ongoing regulatory changes, and our land use decision-making through the Placebuilder will ensure that we continue to be a safe and attractive city for years to come.

Mass Transit

> *Concentrate efforts to enhance mass transit along our corridors in order to facilitate better service for our growing population, as well as efficiencies in our transit system.*
>
> *Theme D, Goal 1, Objective C*

One of the trends that might seem counter to the goals, objectives, policies, and strategy of *Imagine Lexington* is the current difficulty associated with mass transit. This mode of transportation inherently places individuals in close proximity to one another as they ride together in an enclosed vehicle to get to their destination. While the Comprehensive Plan views this transit option as an efficient way to travel and focuses on ways to set it up to be successful here in Lexington, there is no denying the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused.

According to the American Public Transportation Association, the pandemic has created a drastic reduction in ridership nationally. Light rail, subways, and commuter railroads have seen 85% fewer riders than the same quarter last year, and bus transit has seen a 67% reduction. While this is

certainly alarming, as *Imagine Lexington* relies on enhancing mass transit along our major corridors, Steven Higashide, the Director of Transit Center (a New York think tank) says that "history suggests" that people will not be afraid of mass transit forever. Specifically, he recalled similar discussions following the SARS outbreak in Hong Kong and the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, and noted that "Ridership rebounded within weeks or months once that source of fear had been taken away" (Vock, 2020).

Additionally, Lexington cannot afford to give up on a transportation option that many in our community rely on for everyday transportation. A percentage of people still rely on mass transit because they choose to, they cannot afford the costs of owning a vehicle, or they are unable to operate a vehicle on their own. Recent statistics indicate that approximately 15% of renter households and 2% of owner households do not own a vehicle, though with increased hardships it is possible that number has increased (ACS 5-year, 2018). It is critical for us to be able to continue to provide safe and reliable transportation to those who need it.

Focus for 2020-2021 Regulations & Adaptable Approach

Imagine Lexington includes a table of *57* "Action Items" that are found throughout various policies within the Plan. These implementation tasks are focused on Planning staff and the City to implement, and range from specific regulation change recommendations to creating and updating plans. Many of the items are in progress and a portion are completed (see figures below & Implementation Table on p. 28).

Where year one's implementation was focused on familiarizing development professionals and the community with the Placebuilder, year two focused on initiating the various studies and regulation changes that would bring our ordinances into alignment with the plan. We maintained a focus on various methods of public outreach and education.

Action Item Breakdown After Year 2*:

44% in progress	**16%** complete	**46%** yet to begin

*Some multi-faceted tasks are both complete and in progress

Mornings with Planning

ONGOING

Mornings with Planning is a monthly interactive digital panel series, held on the first Wednesday of each month to discuss how our City's planning efforts have evolved over time.

These discussions tackle a new topic every month, bringing experts from Lexington and beyond to discuss important matters of the day that impact our ever-changing city. They will continue to occur each month throughout 2021.

Due to the social distancing guidelines set in response to COVID-19, the Division of Planning was tasked with finding new and engaging ways to connect with people digitally in lieu of in-person workshops and meetings. By mid-2020, these efforts led to the creation of "Mornings with Planning," a monthly series of moderated digital panels centered on topics grounded in the themes of *Imagine Lexington*. As part of each discussion, we discuss how our City's planning efforts, as well as those of other U.S. communities, have evolved and changed over time.

The engagement offered by "Mornings with Planning" provides the public with educational material that adds to the transparency, accessibility, and effectiveness of our process as we move forward. This has always been a priority of the Division and will continue to be at the lead of our efforts throughout 2021. As

we progress, we will continue to incorporate feedback given by viewers, whether related to preferred topics for future discussions or ways to make the webinar experience more engaging and inclusive.

TOPICS

Planning's Response to COVID-19
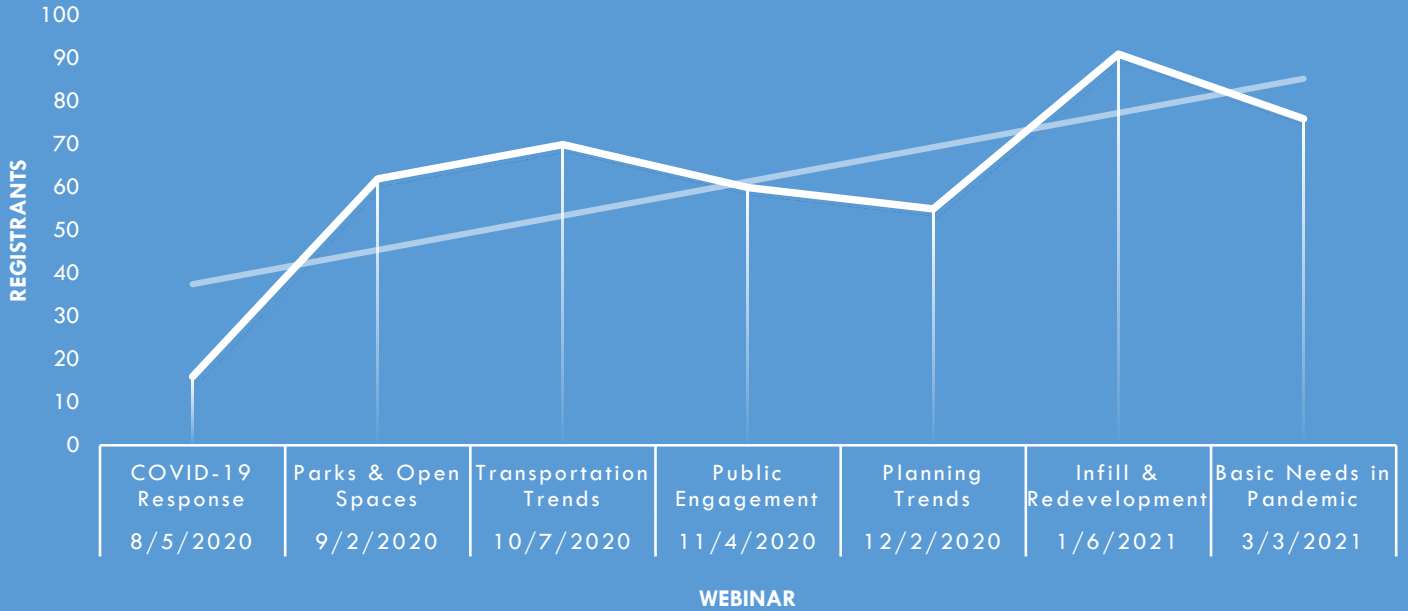
Parks & Open Spaces

Transportation Trends
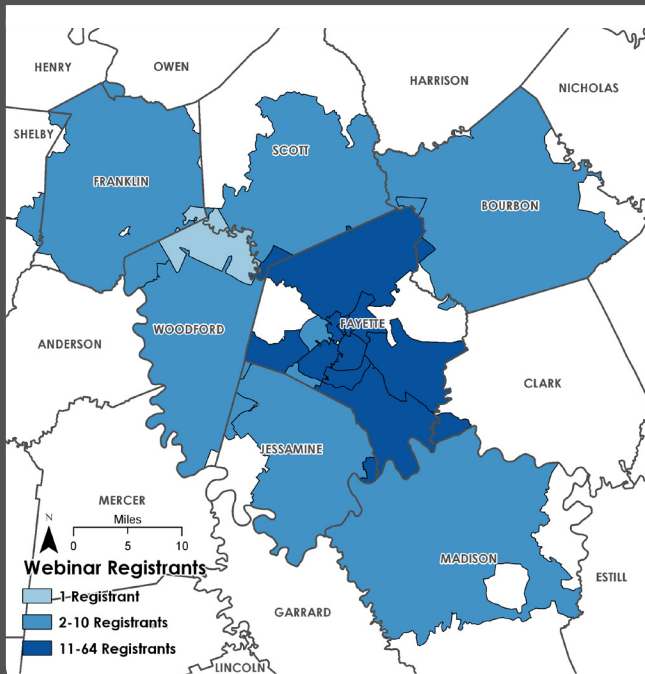
Public Engagement

Planning Trends Nationwide

Infill & Redevelopment

Providing Basic Human Needs during a Pandemic

WEBINAR REGISTRANTS

Chart axis: REGISTRANTS (0–100)

COVID-19 Response	Parks & Open Spaces	Transportation Trends	Public Engagement	Planning Trends	Infill & Redevelopment	Basic Needs in Pandemic
8/5/2020	9/2/2020	10/7/2020	11/4/2020	12/2/2020	1/6/2021	3/3/2021

WEBINAR

Regional Mornings with Planning Registrants by ZIP Code

Webinar Registrants
- 1-Registrant
- 2-10 Registrants
- 11-64 Registrants

STATISTICS

7 *episodes*

430 *total registrations (238 unique registrants)*

More than 1/3 *of registrants have attended multiple webinars*

12 *Fayette County ZIP codes represented*

Regional *representation (see map)*

Registrants from **10 States***: Florida, Illinois, Minnesota, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, New York, Michigan, & Iowa*

Nearly 100 organizations represented, including:

University of Kentucky, Transylvania, LexTran, Lexington Public Library, Community Land Trust, Commerce Lexington, AARP, Fayette Alliance, municipal representatives from Paris-Bourbon County and Louisville Metro, Councilmembers, & Planning Commission members

Public Engagement Toolkit

COMPLETE

The Public Engagement Toolkit (PET) offers developers guidance and tips for conducting meaningful engagement. Simultaneously, it empowers community members to understand the develop

- **Understand the development review process**

- **Know where to find information about proposed developments**

- **Recognize proper stages in the process to provide input**

In the fall of 2019, the Division of Planning formed an advisory panel to help define "meaningful engagement" and develop the Public Engagement Toolkit.

This toolkit is in response to input heard from both developers and neighborhood interests following the adoption of *Imagine Lexington*. The goal is to move the needle from passive methods of communication in which the public has to approach the City for information about a project, to a more active method where developers are reaching out directly to stakeholders.

COVID-19 shifted the reality of what are to be considered safe and available platforms for engagement. In response to this shift, an addendum to the original document was made in May 2020 to provide readers with

more specific guidance on how to initiate and carry-out meaningful public engagement on digital platforms. This addendum included a new "Online Meeting Tips" section as well as some step-by-step guidance on how to best organize and implement digital public input meetings.

NOTABLE DATES

*Final Advisory Group Meeting - **Feb. 5, 2020***
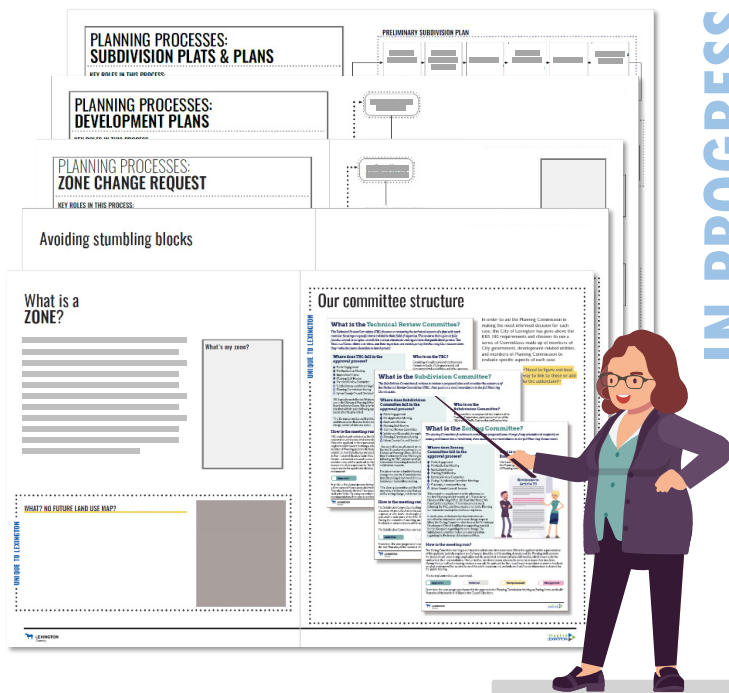
*Initial Publication - **Feb. 20, 2020***

Revised Publication - **May 21, 2020***

*Resolution Passed - **June 11, 2020***

*Revision with addendum to provide additional guidance relating to digital public engagement

Development Handbook

IN PROGRESS

The Development Handbook will give developers and community members insight into the basics of how the development review process unfolds in Lexington-Fayette County.

This revised version of the previous Developer's Handbook will provide:

- **Additional guidance/information on planning processes to meet the needs of new and experienced developers**

- **Increased transparency and legibility for the public**

Following the success of the Public Engagement Toolkit advisory group model, the Division of Planning reconvened multiple members of that group, with some new additions, to provide insight for the update of the Development Handbook (formerly the Developer's Handbook). The kick-off meeting for the Development Handbook Advisory Group took place in the summer of 2020, with meetings continuing throughout the second half of 2020 and into 2021. Feedback from these meetings, as well as input from internal meetings with planning staff, are being used to directly inform the contents of the handbook.

A significant portion of the revisions being proposed by the advisory group and staff revolve around a series of detailed planning process workflows. These detailed workflows outline multiple planning processes,

including zone change requests, subdivisions, development plans, and Board of Adjustment. The detailed versions of these workflows will be translated into a visual and legible format for that both developers and members of the public may use when engaging with planning.

NOTABLE DATES

Advisory Group Meeting #1 - ***June 17, 2020***

Advisory Group Meeting #2 - ***July 15, 2020***

Advisory Group Meeting #3 - ***Aug. 19, 2020***
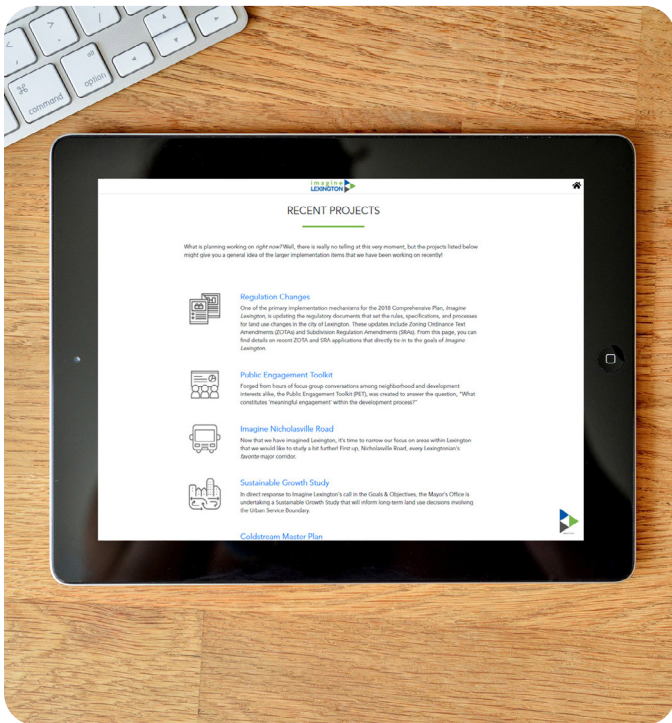
Advisory Group Meeting #4 - ***Oct. 28, 2020***

Advisory Group Meeting #5 - ***Nov. 18, 2020***

Advisory Group Meeting #6 - ***Jan. 27, 2021***

Final Advisory Group Meeting - ***Spring 2021***

ImagineLexington.com Updates

ONGOING

ImagineLexington.com was created to provide the community with an interactive platform to engage with the 2018 Comprehensive Plan and the various elements attached to the plan.

Additional components of the site have and will continue to serve as a mechanism to connect people with current goings-on in Planning, such as progress on implementation items, status of projects/studies, and ways for members of the public to get involved.

Accessibility to information, transparency, inclusion, and public awareness and participation are an essential message of *Imagine Lexington*. From the thousands that participated in its creation, to the ongoing and evolving public outreach and education today, it is critical that the general public be aware of and engaged in our process. Imaginelexington.com provides an additional layer of accessibility to the Plan by laying out three key components – Imagine, Inform, and Implement. The website officially launched on Feb. 28, 2020, to celebrate the one-year birthday of the plan.

With the completion of the "Imagine" section of the website in early 2020, staff focused on building out both the "Inform" and "Implement" sections of the site. The "Inform" section stands as a place for the public to learn about

ways to get involved and *stay* involved with planning and planning-related projects. The "Implement" section presents the public with information on the various action items derived from *Imagine Lexington* policies.

NEW ADDITIONS

*Maps and Data page* for a collection of interactive maps and data-focused infographics

Uncommon Commons page for a listing of Planning's digital engagement resources and videos, including Mornings with Planning

Regulation Changes landing page for descriptions of the main types of regulatory changes and links to recent amendments

ZOTA/SRA Project Pages for a closer look at regulation changes linked to Imagine Lexington

Demographic Infographics
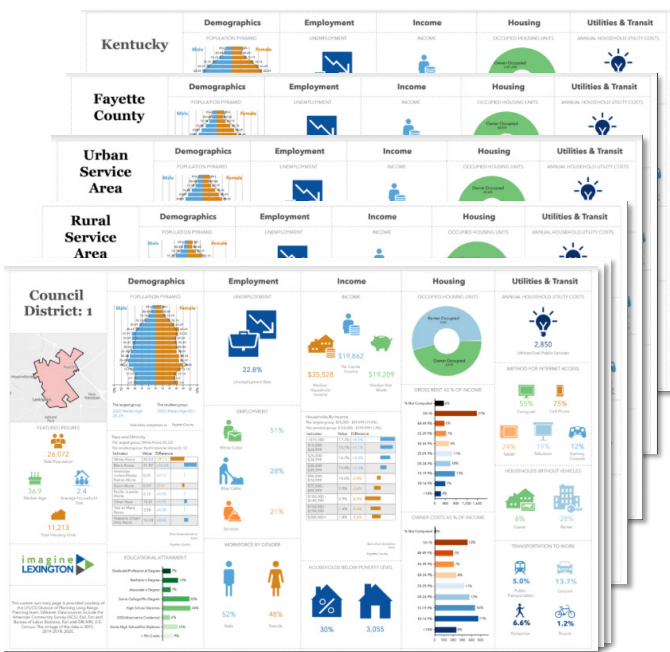
COMPLETE

The Division of Planning released a set of infographics focused on demographic data in order to better understand the community it serves, as well as surrounding communities in our region and within the greater Commonwealth of Kentucky.

The infographics are accessible online and intend to serve a range of functions for multiple users, including: community members, Planning staff, the Urban County Council, and LFUCG Divisions, Boards, and Commissions.

Originally published in August 2020, this set of infographics intends to serve a multi-functional purpose for both Lexington-Fayette County and our neighboring communities. With the use of these materials, we are able to:

Understand Our Community – By looking at objective information about our community with the greater context of the various areas, we gain a greater understanding of it.

Monitor Change – By regularly reviewing the information displayed, we can detect changes and adjust to the needs of the community.

Measure Plan Progress – The Comprehensive Plan covers a lot of important content. These infographics, and others in development, help up to see where we are at.

Transform Data into Knowledge – Data is just data until it is contextualized and can

be considered knowledge. From there, that knowledge fuels action.

Identify Constructive Comparisons – By comparing areas of various scales and geographies, we can gain constructive insights.

Inform Policy Decisions – Policy with a strong foundation in the reality of our community has greater positive impacts.

DATA AT SCALE

Available Infographics include:

All 12 Council Districts in Lexington

Urban & Rural Service Areas in Lexington

Fayette County, Kentucky

State of Kentucky

Imagine Nicholasville Road

COMPLETE

Launched in late 2019, Imagine Nicholasville Road is the first corridor study to emerge from Imagine Lexington. The results from this study will provide guidance for future development and decision-making efforts on Nicholasville Road, with a goal of enhancing the corridor as our community continues to develop.

The study also prioritizes transportation investments and identifies methods of coordination with redevelopment as it occurs over time.

Imagine Nicholasville Road focuses on our city's housing and transportation needs, looking a how incorporating a mix of land uses, along with a more pedestrian and transit-oriented street design, can contribute more transit-accessible housing and commercial uses while also increasing use and efficiency of transit along the corridor.

In coordination with consultants from WSP and other LFUCG divisions, the Division of Planning initiated the public input phase of the study in early 2020, launching the project website and an online survey. A very well-attended public input meeting occurred on March 4, 2020, where attendees were able to provide feedback on existing opportunities and challenges along the corridor. For the second round of engagement, a virtual public input meeting was offered during the month

of November, which featured an interactive survey for the community to respond to various proposed conceptual designs for the corridor.

The results of this plan will allow us to explore new ways to accommodate development and will identify the policies necessary to implement the community's vision of a reimagined Nicholasville Road.

NOTABLE DATES

Project Kick-Off with Consultants - **Nov. 2019**

Public Meeting #1 - **March 4, 2020**

Public Meeting #2 (virtual) - **Nov. 9, 2020 - Dec. 2, 2020**

Draft presented to Planning Commission - **Feb. 18, 2021**

Coldstream Master Plan

Given this new vehicle for economic development, Imagine Lexington recommends a long-range plan to study the possible uses, infrastructure, layouts, synergies with the existing Coldstream Master Plan and design criteria, and other opportunities for the site to maximize its potential.

Excerpt from Theme C, Prosperity Policy #12

200 Acres

IN PROGRESS

The Coldstream Master Plan will evaluate infrastructure investments to prepare a 200 acre site within the Urban Service Boundary to attract new jobs, preserve and enhance the environment, and provide community assets and connectivity.

Lexington-Fayette Urban County Industrial Authority has hired Gresham Smith to create a master plan for the site, which currently operates as a dairy research farm for the University of Kentucky. Visit project website.

Sustainable Growth Study

Protect Lexington's invaluable rural resources and inform long-range planning for infrastructure, community facilities and economic development through the creation of a new process for determining long-term land use decisions involving the Urban Service Boundary and Rural Activity Centers.

Theme E, Goal 4

IN PROGRESS

In direct response to Imagine Lexington's call in the Goals & Objectives, the Mayor's Office is undertaking a Sustainable Growth Study that will inform long-term land use decisions involving the Urban Service Boundary (USB).

A task force has been developing an objective framework that will provide local officials and community stakeholders with tools to evaluate future land use decisions, all within the context of the "ideal use and preservation of resources" within the USB." Visit project website.

Regulation Changes

Affordable Housing Parking

This Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment supports affordable housing by reducing previous parking requirements that were often a limiting factor in the creation of affordable housing projects.

Zoning Ordinance Articles 8-15(o), 8-16(o), and 16-10

Official Status:

Approved by Urban County Council

In effect Sept. 3, 2020

NOTABLE DATES

Initial Planning Commission (PC) Work Session - **May 21, 2020**

PC Committee Meetings - **July 2, 2020**

PC Public Hearing w/ Recommended Approval - **July 23, 2020**

Urban County Council Work Session - **Aug. 25, 2020**

Urban County Council 1st Reading - **Aug. 27, 2020**

Urban County Council 2nd Reading w/Approval - **Sept. 3, 2020**

Full Affordable Housing Parking Project Page

According to the 2017 Housing Demand Study, Lexington has a need for affordable housing. Although, affordable housing providers have long indicated that Lexington's parking requirements presented significant barriers to providing such housing for those that desperately need it. This Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment, passed by the Urban County Council in September 2020, looks to support affordable housing through parking reform.

Instead of requiring developers to provide the greater of 0.9 parking spaces per bedroom or 1.5 parking spaces per dwelling unit, the approved changes now require 1 parking space per dwelling unit. This brings the required parking in line with that of single-family houses.

This revision does not change the developer's ability to provide additional parking as needed or desired.

OR*

0.9 parking spaces per bedroom

1.5 parking spaces per dwelling unit

1 parking spaces per dwelling unit

Floor Area Ratio

This Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment increases the standard Floor Area Ratio (FAR) values allowed in certain zones, which directly and positively affects housing stock - particularly in number of units, diversity of options, and affordability of available units.

Zoning Ordinance Articles 8-12, 8-13, and 8-14

Official Status:

Approved by Urban County Council;

In effect Sept. 24, 2020

Full Floor Area Ratio Project Page

Imagine Lexington's goal of maintaining Lexington's Urban Service Boundary is predicated on implementing the policies within the plan, including increasing housing options and opportunities, particularly through the development of regulatory mechanisms to allow for incremental density in our community.

This Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment, passed by the Urban County Council in September 2020, focuses on the allowable Floor Area Ratio (FAR) values in certain multi-family zones (see project page for definition).

By increasing these FAR values, we allow for incremental increases in housing units, more flexibility for builders looking to do creative, small scale housing projects, greater efficiency in infrastructure spending, and the gradual proliferation of well-designed infill that will be a relief valve for the Urban Service Area.

*Following the Council's 1st Reading, two additional Council Work Sessions took place

**The Council's 2nd reading was postponed from Aug. 27, 2020 to Sept. 24, 2020 to allow for additional discussion

Zone	Previous	Updated
R-3 (Planned Neighborhood Residential) FAR Lot Coverage Height	0.5 25% 35'	0.75 25% 40'
R-4 (High Density Apartment) FAR Lot Coverage	0.7 30%	1.6 40%
R-5 (High Rise Apartment) FAR Lot Coverage	1.3 35%	2.25 45%

Regulation Changes

Street Patterns and Continuity

IN PROGRESS

This Land Subdivision Regulations Text Amendment revises the standards for street patterns for new development for the purpose of encouraging the creation of a more connected street network.

Land Subdivision Regulations Article 1-14, 6-4(a), 6-8(b), 6-8(d), and 6-13(b)

Official Status:

In development with Planning Staff; Public Hearing Scheduled

NOTABLE DATES

Initial Planning Commission (PC) Work Session - *July 30, 2020*

Meetings with Other LFUCG Committees- *Nov. 4, 2020*

Stakeholder Engagement with Development & Design Community - *Dec. 16, 2020*

PC Work Session - *Jan. 28, 2021*

UPCOMING PC Public Hearing - *Apr. 8, 2021*

Full Street Patterns & Continuity Project Page

A connected street network creates safer, more desirable neighborhoods with reduced congestion and improved bicycle/pedestrian options. This proposed Subdivision Regulation Amendment seeks to improve the layout and continuity of Lexington's street network by proactively revising Lexington's standards for new development street patterns:

Revised standards for more manageable blocks

Max. block length from 1,600 ft to 800 ft

Remove 500 ft minimum block length

Revised standards for cul-de-sacs

Max. cul-de-sac length from 1,000 ft to 500 ft

Prohibiting cul-de-sacs off of cul-de-sacs

Revised standard for access to adjacent developments

Require street connections into adjacent developments or vacant land every 1/4 mile

Existing or proposed public facilities (parks, schools, open spaces, greenways) must have the majority of the facility front onto a street in new developments

◀ | | | PRE-INDUSTRIAL | | | | | | ~1920 | | | | | | | | | | ~1950 | | | | | | | | | | ~1970 | | | | | | | | | | TODAY | | | ▶

Open Space

This Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment seeks to address open space requirements for private properties, encouraging the development of common open spaces in our neighborhoods that are safe and welcoming.

Zoning Ordinance Article 20

Official Status:

In development with Planning Staff

Initial Planning Commission (PC) Work Session - ***Sept. 17, 2020***

Meetings with Other LFUCG Committees- ***Nov. 4, 2020; Dec. 4, 2020; Feb. 23, 2021; March 17, 2021***

Stakeholder Engagement with Development & Design Community - ***Nov. 11, 2020***

Stakeholder Engagement with Neighborhood & Advocacy Groups - ***Feb. 25, 2021***

Full Open Space Project Page

Well-designed open spaces provide the physical setting for people to gather and establish social connections, create a sense of community and social cohesion, and encourage health through walking and activity—and they are integral to the development of complete neighborhoods and communities.

Intentionally planned access to safe and welcoming open spaces is critical to achieving equitable development. Overall quality of life is enhanced through the social, environmental, and economic benefits that greenspaces and open spaces provide. However, our current open space regulations fall short of achieving these goals.

This proposed Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment, which is currently in the development and public input phase, will be taking a close look at how our regulations can be improved and forward:

Concepts of well-designed neighborhoods and equitable access to nature spaces

Flexible new standards aimed at access and functionality

Focused on the quality and utility of open spaces on private developments

Changes for both multi-family and single-family developments

Combined Open Space

Vegetated Area

The portion of the lot covered by existing or new vegetation.

Common Area

The portion of the lot intentionally planned for outdoor gathering.
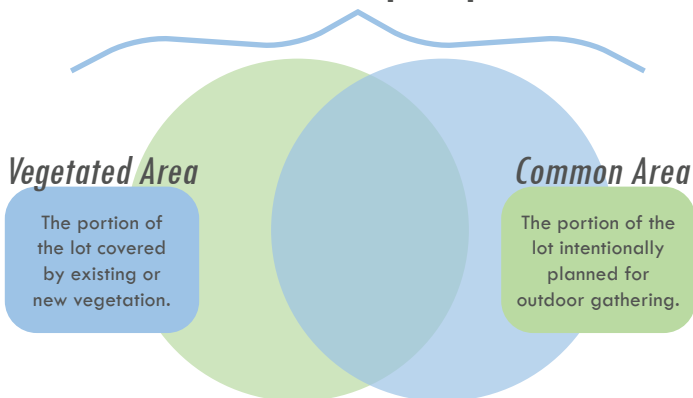
Regulation Changes

Responsive Parking

This Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment will modernize parking regulations to balance the needs of parking demand and supply.

Zoning Ordinance Articles 1, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 18, 22, 23, and 28

Official Status:

In development with Planning Staff

NOTABLE DATES

Initial Planning Commission (PC) Work Session -
May 21, 2020

Lexington Community Parking Survey Launch -
March 9, 2021

PC Work Session -
March 18, 2021

Full Rethink Parking Project Page

Parking is a necessary component of most all American cities, and Lexington is no exception. We exist in a reality where many people have and will continue to need well-placed, accessible parking, which is a foundational consideration for most all planning efforts - especially parking reform.

The impacts of parking are tied to many, sometimes hidden, aspects of our community. Some are social, such as with walkability and street aesthetic; some are economic, such as with commercial interest, maintenance costs, and rent prices. Others may focus on the environmental implications of parking in a time where building sustainable, green cities is becoming a priority across the globe.

To harmonize these effects with the sustained need for parking requires a concerted effort to identify and implement Responsive Parking that support all users, including motorists, cyclists, transit riders, and pedestrians.

"Rethink Parking" is the umbrella initiative directly linked to the Division of Planning's efforts to modernize parking regulations in the Zoning Ordinance. The proposed regulations were developed with the intent to balance the needs of parking demand and supply in Lexington while also creating safe, walkable, sustainable, and livable neighborhoods, workplaces, and amenities.

Also a part of this initiative is a robust community outreach campaign that will unfold over the course of 2021. This campaign began with the launch of the Lexington Community Parking Survey in March 2021, which was a coordinated effort with the LFUCG Department of Geographic Information Services to collect community-gathered information on the public's perceptions of our current parking situation.

Development Report

Each year, Planning Services totals numbers for each of the different types of applications processed within the Division of Planning.

This has been part of the reporting process since 1970, meaning the division now has over 50 years of data. This data allows us to monitor trends and variations relating to the number of applications processed.

Averaging the number of cases processed from the span of 1970-2020 produces the following results:

Zone Change cases – 44 cases/year

Board of Adjustment cases – 118 cases/year

Development/Subdivision cases – 368 cases/year

As seen below, the trend over recent years has generally been a decline in the total

number of applications processed. For 2020 in particular, there was a definitive slowing in activity seen when comparing our 50 year averages with the totals for 2020 listed on the right. This reduction of activity is due to general uncertainty around large financial expenditures and the government mandated COVID-19 restrictions. These factors impacted all facets of development, especially the construction industry.

Looking ahead, Lexington and other communities are expected to see rebounds in development activity over the next few years, which has a direct correlation with a healing economy and the reopening of different development-related industries.

All Planning Applications Processed, 1970-2020
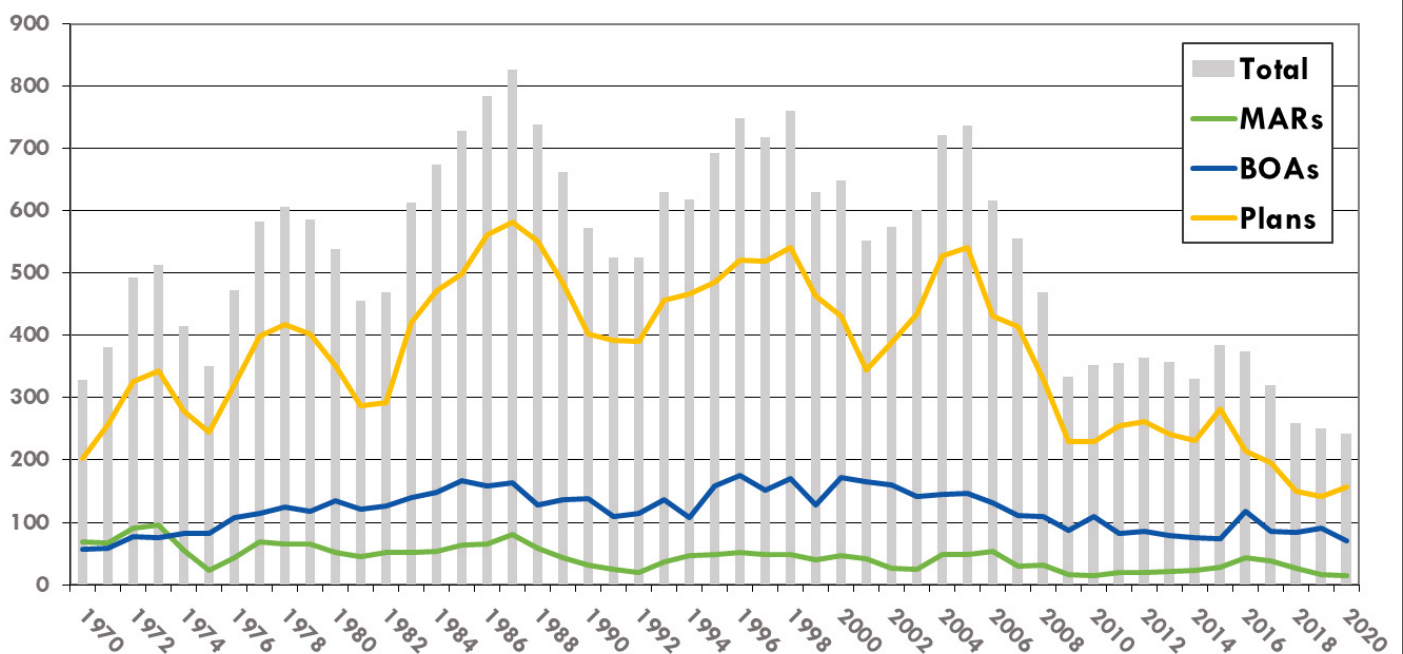
FOR THE 2020 CALENDAR YEAR:

Map Amendments (Zone changes)...15

Board of Adjustment Cases...71

Subdivision & Development Plans..157

Lots Created..496

Zoning Enforcement Actions...782

IMPLEMENTATION TABLE

Also listed throughout the policies of Imagine Lexington, the following implementation items stand as short- and long-term tasks for the Planning Division once Imagine Lexington is put into action. Progress on these items will be tracked and actively updated to promote public awareness of our progress.

ACTION ITEM STATUS

◻ Complete (green)	◻ Yet to begin (gray)
◻ In Progress (blue)	

THEME	PILLAR	POLICY	ACTION ITEM	OTHER APPLICABLE POLICIES	AGENCIES	TIMELINE (NEAR/ MID/LONG/ ONGOING)
A	Design	9	Amend Zoning Ordinance to redefine open space requirements.	B-SU-4, D-PL-4, C-LI-8	Planning	Ongoing
A	Design	10	Inventory existing neighborhood focal points and perform gap analysis.		Planning	Mid
A	Design	12	Amend Zoning Ordinance to encourage residential development within existing neighborhood serving business districts.		Planning	Ongoing
A	Density	2	Evaluate and amend residential zones to allow greater housing opportunities.	A-DS-8	Planning	Ongoing
A	Density	3	Perform gap analysis of existing neighborhoods to identify enhancement opportunities for new supportive uses.	D-PL-2, C-LI-7	Planning	Long
A	Equity	2	Review funding opportunities for Comprehensive Plan priorities.	C-PR-2	Planning	Mid
A	Equity	5	Work with Council to review tenant protections.		Planning	Mid
A	Equity	5	Work with Council to create a rental registration program.		Planning, Code Enforcement	Mid
A	Equity	6	Partner with Senior Services Commission to develop and implement Accessory Dwelling Unit zoning options.	D-SU-9	Planning, Senior Services	Near
A	Equity	7	Inventory and map existing social services and healthcare facilities.	D-SU-4, D-SU-5, D-SU-6	Planning	Near
A	Equity	8	Partner with the Senior Services Commission to develop an age-friendly plan as part of the AARP Age-Friendly Communities Initiative.		Planning, Senior Services	Near
B	Protection	1	Coordinate with the Division of Water Quality to prioritize sewer capacity projects that will facilitate areas of expected growth.		Planning, Water Quality	Mid
B	Protection	2	Develop an inventory of Special Natural Protection Areas within the Urban Service Area.		Planning, Environmental Services	Mid

■ Complete ■ In Progress ■ Yet to begin

THEME	PILLAR	POLICY	ACTION ITEM	OTHER APPLICABLE POLICIES	AGENCIES	TIMELINE (NEAR/MID/LONG/ONGOING)
B	Protection	6	Review the zoning ordinance for new agritourism and ecotourism opportunities.	C-LI-1	Planning	Long
B	Protection	7	Update zoning ordinance to reflect national best practices on floodplain protections.		Planning, Environmental Services	Mid
B	Sustainability	5	Overhaul parking standards throughout the zoning ordinance.	C-PR-10, A-DS-7	Planning	Near
B	Sustainability	6	Implement an outreach program through employers to inform and incentivize employees to reduce single-occupancy commuting.		Planning	Near
B	Sustainability	8	Pursue STAR Community certification.		Planning	Long
B	Sustainability	9	Perform analysis of green building best practices and identify opportunities to implement.		Planning	Mid
B	Sustainability	11	Update the green infrastructure elements in the Engineering Manuals to reflect current best practices.		Planning, Engineering	Mid
B	Sustainability	12	Explore permitting incentives for green building design.	B-SU-7	Planning	Long
B	Restoration	1	Implement recommendations from the Urban Forestry Management Plan.	B-PR-7	Planning, Environmental Services	Mid
B	Restoration	3	Work with Parks & Recreation and private organizations to facilitate the creation of a regional sports complex.		Planning, Park & Recreation	Mid
C	Livability	9	Inventory and analyze existing industry and production land, identifying areas to enhance or repurpose based on market and locational factors.		Planning	Near
C	Diversity	5	Explore recommendations to promote development at specific sites within Opportunity Zones, while minimizing displacement.		Planning	Mid
C	Diversity	6	Update Zoning Ordinance regulations related to home occupations and home offices.		Planning	Mid
C	Prosperity	8	Perform analysis of existing employment opportunities and graduate supply from area institutions.		Planning	Ongoing
C	Prosperity	9	Study the efficacy of the Professional Office zone, looking for ordinance revisions aimed at reducing vacancy rate.		Planning	Ongoing
C	Prosperity	12	Create a Long Range Plan for the 250 acre Economic Development site at Coldstream.		Planning	Mid

Complete   In Progress   Yet to begin

THEME	PILLAR	POLICY	ACTION ITEM	OTHER APPLICABLE POLICIES	AGENCIES	TIMELINE (NEAR/MID/LONG/ONGOING)
D	Connectivity	1	Amend Subdivision Regulations street standards.	A-DS-1. A-DS-2, A-DS-5, A-DS-11, A-DS-13, B-SU-1, D-CO-2, D-CO-3, D-CO-4, D-CO-5, D-CO-6	Planning	Ongoing
D	Connectivity	2	Implement Projects from the Lexington Area MPO Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan.	B-SU-1, B-RE-4, A-DS7	Planning	Ongoing
D	Placemaking	1	Establish land use and transportation design guidelines for development adjacent to Town Branch Commons.		Planning	Near
D	Placemaking	1	Perform a study to determine the economic and social impacts of Town Branch Commons.		Planning	Near
D	Placemaking	3	Amend the zoning ordinance to include placemaking elements.	D-PL-5	Planning	Ongoing
D	Placemaking	6	Update the Expansion Area Master Plan.		Planning	Mid
D	Placemaking	7	Host workshops with development and neighborhood interests to create a collaborative pre-development process.		Planning	Near
D	Placemaking	8	Work with Council to increase staffing to develop a tactical placemaking program within the Division.		Planning	Near
D	Placemaking	10	Initiate discussions with the Public Art Commission about potential ordinance revisions to increase public art opportunities.		Planning	Mid
D	Placemaking	11	Update the Adaptive Reuse Ordinance.		Planning	Mid
D	Placemaking	12	Perform corridor studies along arterial streets that examine land use and transportation elements.	A-DS-1, B-SU-3	Planning	Near
D	Placemaking	13	Update the Downtown Master Plan.		Planning, Downtown Lex Partnership	Mid
D	Placemaking	14	Implement the recommendations from the Your Parks, Our Future Parks Master Plan.	C-LI-5	Planning	Mid
D	Support	1	Engage with Fayette County Public Schools in order to align priorities in site selection and design.	D-SU-2	Planning	Near
E	Accountability	1	Establish a new process for long-term land use decisions involving the Urban Service Boundary.		Planning	Near
E	Accountability	2	Update the Zoning Ordinance to reflect Imagine Lexington priorities.		Planning	Ongoing

Complete   In Progress   Yet to begin

THEME	PILLAR	POLICY	ACTION ITEM	OTHER APPLICABLE POLICIES	AGENCIES	TIMELINE (NEAR/MID/LONG/ONGOING)
E	Accountability	3	Host a Placebuilder workshop and training for developers, Planning Commissioners, and any other interested parties.		Planning	Near
E	Accountability	3	Create a public outreach program for ongoing community education on Imagine Lexington and the Placebuilder.		Planning	Near
E	Accountability	4	Develop a series of Comprehensive Plan metrics.		Planning	Near
E	Accountability	6	Create a Citizen Advisory Panel.		Planning	Near
E	Stewardship	1	Update the 1990 Stone Fence Inventory.		Planning	Long
E	Stewardship	5	Conduct a Blue Sky Small Area Plan.		Planning	Long
E	Stewardship	6	Update the Zoning Ordinance provisions for Agritourism.		Planning	Long
E	Growth	1	Update the Zoning Ordinance to reflect the Imagine Lexington's infill policies.		Planning	Ongoing
E	Growth	4	Update the Adaptive Reuse provisions in the Zoning Ordinance.		Planning	Mid
E	Growth	7	Update the Zoning Ordinance to accommodate and anticipate autonomous vehicles.		Planning	Mid
E	Growth	8	Work with the Planning Commission and Council to proactively pursue government-initiated zone changes recommended by corridor studies.		Planning	Mid
E	Growth	10	Update Lexington's Commercial Zones to include more varied uses to accommodate the shifting retail model.		Planning	Ongoing

References

The various plans, studies, reports, and articles mentioned throughout this report are listed below.

LFUCG/Internal Resources

Imagine Lexington

imaginelexington.com

LFUCG Land Subdivision Regulations -

lexingtonky.gov/land-subdivision-regulations

LFUCG Zoning Ordinance

library.municode.com/ky/lexington-fayette_
county

Commission for Racial Justice and Equality

Summary Page - lexingtonky.gov/commission-
racial-justice-and-equality

Full Report - bit.ly/3kxXT5p

Public Engagement Toolkit

imaginelexington.com/PET

Fayette County Housing Demand Study

drive.google.com/file/d/11rszNUmkgvJiglXRb
6Xb9BfjoBkNf1Zv/view?usp=sharing

Imagine Nicholasville Road

imaginenicholasvilleroad.com

Coldstream Master Plan

coldstreammasterplan.com

Sustainable Growth Study

lexsustainablegrowth.mysocialpinpoint.com

Regulation Change Project Pages

Affordable Housing Parking

imaginelexington.com/ZOTA_affordable-
housing-parking

Floor Area Ratio

imaginelexington.com/ZOTA_FAR

Street Patterns & Continuity

imaginelexington.com/SRA_street-continuity

Open Space

imaginelexington.com/ZOTA_open-space

Responsive Parking

imaginelexington.com/rethink-parking

External Resources

Brenan, B. M. (2020, October 13). *COVID-19 and Remote Work: An Update.* Gallup. https://news.gallup.com/poll/321800/covid-remote-work-update.aspx

Courtney, E. (2021, February 8). *Remote Work Statistics: Navigating the New Normal.* FlexJobs. https://www.flexjobs.com/blog/post/remote-work-statistics/

Hamidi, S., Sabouri, S., & Ewing, R. (2020). *Does density aggravate the COVID-19 pandemic? Early findings and lessons for planners.* Journal of the American Planning Association, 86(4), 495-509.

Iqbal, M. (2021). *Zoom Revenue and Usage Statistics (2020).* Business of Apps. https://www.businessofapps.com/data/zoom-statistics/

Vock, D. C. (2020). *Transit in Crisis.* American Planning Association. https://www.planning.org/planning/2020/dec/transit-in-crisis/

U.S. Census Bureau. (2018). 2014-2018 *American Community Survey 5-year 2018 Renter/Owner Households with No Vehicles.* Retrieved from https://covid19.census.gov/datasets/8b1688a8a3d34d86b882b106fcda7267_2?geometry=36.702%2C-16.868%2C-36.071%2C72.108&selectedAttribute=B25044_004E